

SEX EDUCATION AIMS, POSSIBILITIES AND PLANS*

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I COUNT it a pleasure and a privilege to have been invited to address you to-day—a pleasure because it is always a stimulating experience to lecture to an audience such as this; a privilege because your *Society* has many members who were pioneers in the field of sex education.

It is sometimes forgotten, I think, by many educationists to-day how much is owed to these pioneers. Whatever differences of opinion there may be about the desirability of the specific measures they recommended, it is clear that the great advance in sex education which is taking place to-day could not have occurred if they had not prepared the ground. As a result of their work, views that were novel and unorthodox are now almost commonplace, and acceptable even in the Ministries of Health and Education.

Results of Official Support

Perhaps the greatest turning-point on this path towards official recognition was the transference in 1942 of the major part of the work of the British Social Hygiene Council to the Central Council for Health Education. What this official support has meant to the cause of sex education is perhaps best illustrated by one or two figures.

Since some of the bodies carrying out this work publish no statistical report, it is impossible to give figures that would be all-inclusive. The bulk of the work, however, was carried out by the British Social Hygiene Council until April 1st, 1942, and by the Central Council for Health Education since that date. The sex education lectures given by these two bodies during the past five years are as follows:

Audience	1940-1	1941	1942	1943-4	1944-5
Teachers	7	95	83	86	231
Youth Leaders	17	35	33	59	117
Parents	21	39	37	75	132
Young People	257	612	580	1,348	1,469
Schoolchildren	71	87	101	208	189

* A paper read before the *Eugenics Society* on May 29th, 1945.

The total attendance at these meetings during 1943-4 was 68,712 (the figures for 1944-5 are not yet available) while, if the audiences at meetings and film shows on venereal diseases are included, the total attendance during the year was some 300,000. To these figures, moreover, must be added the people reached by the distribution of nearly half a million pamphlets on sex education during the same year.

Quantitatively, then, the present position is fairly satisfactory. The number of people who have received some sort of sex education during the last five years is considerable. It is clear that there has been of recent years a radical and widespread change of public opinion on the question of sex education. The time has passed when it was necessary to state with some vehemence the case against sheer obscurantism. Probably there will remain with us for many years a few frightened adults who will continue to foster the cult of ignorance, but an increasingly large section of the population is allowing the myths of the gooseberry bush and the stork to fade into oblivion. The blank wall of opposition has been breached. The general public, educational and medical administrators, churches and social organizations, teachers and youth leaders, parents and pupils—all are ready to go ahead.

It seems likely that the pioneer battle against obscurantism is now over. It is no longer necessary to press the claims of sex education in language more vigorous than profound. The need now is for careful study of the many educational issues involved. Only after such study is it likely that sex education will be satisfactory in quality as well as quantity.

Aims in Sex Education

The first issue for study is that of objective. What are the aims of sex education, and what are its possibilities? To serve as a basis

for useful action an objective must be desirable, attainable and sufficient—and this cannot be said of some aims that have been propounded.

There are, for example, those who use "sex education" as a euphemism for dilation on the horrors of venereal disease, and hope to frighten young people into "goodness." But sex education is not mere anti-venereal propaganda; it is preparation to live a joyous, well-balanced and fruitful life. There are others whose aim is to produce "morality" by threats of fire and brimstone. But with such "goodness" and such "morality" the educationist can have no truck. A morality that is worthy of the name is not to be based merely on fear, whether it be fear of disease in this world or of damnation in the next. Such aims fail on the test of desirability.

Other aims, perhaps desirable enough in themselves, fail on the score of feasibility. To expect by sex education alone to wipe out prostitution and casual promiscuity, to make all marriages successful and all divorces disappear, to abolish adultery and prevent all fornication, is to be hopelessly unrealistic. The sexual ills of society are many and deep-seated, and education unaided will not eradicate them. Economic and political changes and a new social and spiritual vision are needed, too.

Now what of the criterion of sufficiency? A great many people seem to imagine that sex education consists merely of imparting the so-called "facts of life," although one would have thought that the inadequacy of this conception were abundantly clear. Admittedly, the most obvious task is that of imparting information. Here is the very foundation stone of sex education. It is part of the inalienable intellectual heritage of our people that they be told the truth. With it, they may not in all cases act wisely; but without it they have no basis for judgment.

Yet sex education is more than mere imparting of information. Knowledge of the truth is very rarely harmful and is usually beneficial, so that any person who helps to clear away the vast mountain of ignorance on

this subject may feel that some good has been done. But a study of ancient or contemporary history, or even a superficial knowledge of the lives of one's acquaintances, will rapidly dispel any illusion that there is necessarily a close correlation between the extent of an individual's knowledge and the excellence of his actions. Something more is needed.

The teaching of the obvious biological facts will make it clear to our children that the human sex organs are essentially similar to those of other mammals, such as the rabbit. And if sex education were to stop there, it would be logical for a child to deduce that the sexual behaviour of a healthy young human should not be very different from that of a healthy young rabbit. But since presumably we do not wish to adopt the rabbit as the model for our sexual behaviour, sex education must break these narrow bounds. It must, at the appropriate stages, deal also with those respects in which humans *differ* from the other mammals, and in particular with the consequences of the unique development of our nervous system and of our peculiar sociability.

But still something else is needed. Even thorough intellectual understanding of these factors is not enough. Our children must be inspired with a feeling of the excellence of sex and of its immense potentialities. Our young people, if they are to deny themselves the immediate sensual pleasures with which their bodies can so richly provide them, must see some reason for such a sacrifice. If they are to be asked to wait, they must feel that they have a future, and a future that is worth waiting for. If society is to make demands, it must see to it that its members think sufficiently highly of it to be willing to accede to them. Behaviour is dependent upon ideals and inspiration as well as upon factual knowledge and intellectual understanding.

It is, however, easy enough to criticize aims expounded or implied by others. Much more difficult is the task of formulating a statement to take their place. I do not feel sufficiently confident to do so at all dogmatically, but at any rate a tentative effort

should be made. I would, therefore, define the aims of sex education something along these lines: "That our people should grow up learning the appropriate facts in the best possible way; that their general attitude to sex should be a completely healthy one; that they should draw up for themselves a code of conduct after careful consideration of all the issues involved and should endeavour to behave according to this rationally determined code; and that they should react to the behaviour of others with sympathy, tolerance and charity—but without spineless acquiescence in a code inferior to their own." No doubt this statement of aims could be much improved, but it will serve as a working basis for the time being. Let us therefore look at it a little more closely.

Imparting Factual Knowledge

First, what constitutes "appropriate" knowledge and at what age should it be imparted? This latter question is clearly one to which there is no simple answer. No one age can be prescribed for sex education, any more than it can for any other aspect of health education or character training. Sex education should surely be a continuous process from early years to later life, and the question should really be re-phrased to read: "What aspects of sex education are particularly appropriate to different ages?" This is obviously difficult to answer in general terms, for no one human is exactly like another. But if we call to our aid that mythical creature the "average" person a reply may be attempted.

I would suggest that by about the age of two or three years children should be learning the polite terminology for the sex organs, just as they learn the words "arm," "leg" and "head." By the time they go to school at about five, they should in most cases know that the baby grows inside the mother and is born via an opening between her legs; and should understand something of the similarities between birth in humans and birth in the domestic mammals. During the next two or three years the child should learn that the father contributes the sperm cell which fertilizes the mother's egg, and

that the penis is placed in the vagina during mating.

These apparently dogmatic statements about the order in which information should be imparted are not made without reason. The suggested order is that indicated by analysis of the questions typically asked by children of various ages. It is interesting to observe that whereas courtship, mating, fertilization, pregnancy and birth occur in that temporal order, children usually display an interest in these processes in the reverse order. Questions about birth and pregnancy tend to be asked first of all. It is usually only later that the child inquires about the rôle of the father, and thus elicits explanations of fertilization and copulation. My belief is that, in general, the right time for enlightenment is when the child seeks it, not when some adult thinks that an appropriate age has been reached.

There are some things, however, in which the adult must act as pacemaker, because the adult knows what sort of ground lies ahead and the child does not. Some time from about the age of twelve onwards a girl will begin her menses, and she needs to be prepared in advance by a simple biological explanation at the age of about eleven. And since menstruation can scarcely fail to be an inconvenience, girls should be encouraged to understand its value and its significance from the point of view of child-birth. An inconvenience is more gladly borne when there seems to be some point in bearing it. Boys also, I believe, should have an idea of the significance of menstruation, so that they do not build up on a basis of ignorance an atmosphere of mystery about their sister's periods.

But more important for boys is a preparation for the changes which will occur in themselves during adolescence. As their testes become active from about the age of fourteen onwards, they will probably have occasional night losses of semen, the so-called "seminal emissions." These, accompanied as they often are by erotic dreams, cause adolescent lads a good deal of worry, and it is our duty to tell them what to expect and explain to them the naturalness and harm-

lessness of these emissions. Minds worried and terrified by the outrageous allegations which still circulate about the alleged ill-effects of masturbation (ranging from insanity to venereal disease and from consumption to impotence) need also to be set at rest—or better still, so fortified by the truth that the worries and tears never materialize.

So far no mention has been made of any other than the reproductive aspect of sex, and there is, I believe, good reason for this. It is clear from their whole attitude that most children of under about twelve years (or even older) think of sex as a purely reproductive matter, and have no conception of its amatory aspect. This attitude was summed up in the question of the eleven-year-old, who was aware that sometimes children are undesired and asked in all simplicity: "If people don't want a baby, why do they do it?" The idea of a couple having sexual relations except with the fixed intention of producing a child was clearly beyond his emotional understanding.

Within the three or four succeeding years, however, the endocrine changes of adolescence begin to produce deeper sexual feelings; an understanding of the love aspect of sex begins to dawn, and with it an interest in the morals and social conventions of sexual behaviour. This interest is particularly marked in girls, who are at this period considerably more mature emotionally than boys of a similar age. It is noticeable that many of the questions that are asked by members of youth clubs show an increased awareness of the emotional aspects of sex as compared with that of the younger child; and sometimes seem to betray some personal experience, if not of actual intercourse, at any rate of preliminary love-making. This, therefore, I suggest, is the period when a point should be made of explaining something more of the influence of the endocrine secretions on the body and the emotions. This, too, is probably the best time for discussing questions such as courtship and marriage, "necking and petting," promiscuity and prostitution, and for stressing the elementary facts about the venereal diseases.

Towards the end of adolescence and in

early adult life, general sex education merges into specific marriage preparation and guidance—a topic too large to consider in any detail now. It may be suggested, however, that apart from a knowledge of the actual technique of intercourse, sex education during the courtship stage should emphasize the importance of each partner understanding well the emotional peculiarities of the other, and exercising delicacy and restraint in whatever degree of lovemaking may be mutually agreed upon. It is necessary, too, to make clear that, as the saying goes, "There is more in marriage than four bare legs and a bed." Couples contemplating marriage should be encouraged to learn something of each other's physical and mental health; to understand the economic implications of marriage and parenthood; to reach agreement on how their future home is to be run; and they should be informed of the sources to which they can turn for further information and guidance.

Sex education, however, should not end with marriage. Apart from any continuing guidance in the technique of intercourse, I believe that all married couples should have some training in child care and parentcraft and—of particular relevance here—should be given some understanding of the normal sexual development of children and of how to cope with the problems arising from it. Here, however, the sex education of one generation merges into that of the next, and perhaps we had better leave the matter for the time being.

Encouraging Healthy Attitudes

The next problem is that of the encouragement of a healthy attitude to sex, and this is a difficult matter, partly because there is by no means unanimity about what in fact constitutes a healthy attitude. I can do no more, therefore, than register my own personal credo.

It seems clear that the first few years of home life are of fundamental importance in emotional development. On impressions gained and attitudes formed in the first five years of life depend to a considerable extent the emotional balance and happiness of the

adult. Let us therefore examine some of the factors influencing these impressions and attitudes.

Because of the close physical proximity and nervous connection between the voiding and the genital organs, attitudes developed with reference to the former are likely to be transferred to the latter. Any feeling of distaste for the process or the products of voiding may therefore have a decidedly unfortunate influence on later feelings about sex. Thus it is patently important not to encourage such feelings but, on the contrary, to convey the impression that voiding, like eating, is a perfectly normal and proper process.

Then there is the question of the so-called "infantile masturbation." It is unfortunately the case that many parents, mistaking the exploratory path of innocence for the broad highway of incipient vice, either tell the child not to be "nasty" or "rude" or by some action show their disapproval. What is the poor infant to think—that it may safely pull its nose and may twiddle its toes with impunity but if it does the same in a region halfway between it incurs displeasure? Clearly there is nothing better calculated to encourage the feeling from the earliest days that there is something quite isolated from the rest of life, something unclean, about the sexual organs and hence, at a later date, by association, about the sexual functions. This too, therefore, must be avoided.

Now, what of the question of nudity? In ancient Sparta, youths and maidens would play and wrestle with each other quite naked, and this was in no way regarded as indecent. During the Christian epoch, however, "the flesh" has to a considerable extent been regarded as shameful, so that by the time Queen Victoria came to the throne the movement against nudity had achieved victory, and missionaries all over the world seemed to regard it as one of their major tasks to clothe the naked tropical converts.

I dare, however, express the hope and belief that this excessive zeal for bodily concealment is disappearing rather rapidly. It is important for our purpose that it should

do so, for it is a commonplace that attitudes to sex are often associated with similar attitudes towards nudity. Thus, if a child from the first learns to regard nudity as in no way an indecent phenomenon, it is reasonable to hope that it will be helped in the development of a healthy attitude to sex. Naturally, however, children must, to save both themselves and others from embarrassment, learn as they grow up that there are occasions and places, including most public occasions and public places, in which nudity is frowned upon.

A great opportunity for encouraging a proper attitude to sex occurs when another child is expected in the family. There is not time to go into any detailed suggestions as to how a sense of pleasurable anticipation may be aroused and crowned with a feeling of family solidarity when the baby arrives; but it is perhaps worth while to quote from a correspondent—who would, I am sure, describe herself as a fairly ordinary wife and mother—to show what a delightfully natural attitude *can* be induced towards this event. She writes:

As the months passed and my figure changed, John and Elizabeth took more and more interest in the baby's coming, and I realized that I need not have felt embarrassed about telling them; it was a matter of delight and wonder to them, and they enjoyed taking care of me. "Can we feel the baby?" they would ask, or if I started doing anything specially strenuous, "Mummy, do be careful, you'll hurt the baby." Their altruism even went so far as to suggest that I should eat the last helpings of their favourite puddings "for the baby." It became not merely a family secret but a co-operative preparation on the part of the whole family. . . .

That, surely, is the goal to aim at.

During these early years, moreover, there are certain attitudes not specifically sexual in nature, which are nevertheless, I believe, of fundamental importance in laying the foundations for a successful family life in later years. I have in mind the development of habitual friendliness to the other members of the family, of affection and consideration for

others, of willingness to share possessions and to co-operate amicably in activities with playmates. I have in mind also the growth of interest in and of a sense of wonder at the workings of nature, the growth of an æsthetic sense, of a desire for personal health and cleanliness, of admiration for vigour and smartness, of distaste for furtiveness and dishonesty. Sex education, indeed, interpenetrates indissolubly with general character training.

With the onset of adolescence, however, other, more specifically sexual attitudes become important. One should endeavour, I believe, to arouse a sense of pride in approaching maturity—and this involves particular care that topics such as menstruation and seminal emission are so dealt with as to instil no sense of repugnance, as is too often the case at present. It is important also that each sex should develop an attitude of sympathetic consideration for the other, regarding friendships as perfectly natural and quite desirable, but as needing the exercise of discretion and restraint.

This is the period too, I suggest, when one should particularly endeavour to encourage an attitude of distaste for obscenity and pornography—without, however, going to the other extreme of prudery or priggishness. There are those, I know, who believe that sex is so sacred that it should never be the object of humour. For my part, I *do* feel that certain aspects of sex and sex behaviour are sometimes rather ludicrous, that sex *may* sometimes quite properly be the occasion of humour; and in consequence I would therefore emphasize the importance of avoiding the sin of hypocrisy. The distinction to make is surely that between hearty, unashamed laughter and nasty, shamefaced sniggering; between something which is funny and incidentally sexual and something which is merely filthy in nature. I subscribe to the comment once made to me in conversation by the late Dr. Temple: "It is all right making jokes involving sex; what one must not do is to make sex into a joke."

By the time adult life is reached basic attitudes are already largely determined. It is important, however, if the idea of sex

education is to be widened, as I believe it should be, into a conception of education for family life, that those contemplating marriage should be encouraged to discuss, reasonably and in a friendly spirit, such matters as the economic running of the home, the division of domestic duties, family planning and so on; and that we should endeavour to ensure that married persons should be considerate in all things towards each other, should not regard the wedding ceremony as terminating the period of courtship, should have a proper attitude to the upbringing of their offspring. But once again we have made the circle, and have reached to the next generation.

Sex Education and Sex Behaviour

We come now to what many people will regard as the crux of the matter—when the appropriate facts have been imparted and healthy attitudes have been encouraged, what may we expect to be the outcome in terms of sexual behaviour? What, indeed, do we *wish* to be the outcome?

We have to recognize that in Great Britain to-day there is a wide divergence of opinion on questions of sex morality and, in particular, on the question of pre-marital intercourse. For those of our fellows who accept the Church's teaching in its entirety no queries will arise about the validity of the marriage institution. But young people are increasingly demanding some other justification for it, and those concerned with sex education must either find the justification or honestly admit that they know of none. I believe, however, that the search is not a very difficult one.

Those who see no intrinsic evil in sex may well feel that in a new Utopia the institution of marriage would have no place, that sex relations would be so governed by universal harmony that any contractual basis for living together would be quite unnecessary. But we are not living in a Utopia of perfect beings; we are part of a world made up of imperfect people. We are not starting out to plan a new society from scratch; we are faced with the much more difficult task of adapting one already in existence, with all

its faults and failings. And whatever may be our differences of opinion about the institutions of Utopia, most of us, I imagine, feel that in our present society the married state has a good deal to be said for it.

I believe, however, that a disservice is done to the cause of sexual morality by those who fail to recognize any gradation in standards of behaviour, and lump together all types of pre-marital intercourse under the omnibus title of "fornication." It seems to me that the relationship between an unmarried couple, living in love together, cannot reasonably be placed in the same moral category as that between a prostitute and the man who has bought the temporary usage of her body.

I feel some impatience, moreover, with those of our eminent fellow citizens, both cleric and lay, who seek by their statements to convey the impression that young people to-day, in contrast with the virtuous youth of their own generation, are sunk in sexual vice. It might restore them to a sense of perspective were they to read the words of Alcuin of York, written before ever William of Normandy set foot on these shores. "Since the time of King Aelfwold," he wrote, "the land has been absolutely submerged under a flood of fornication, adultery and incest, so that the very semblance of modesty is entirely absent." Substitute the name of any recent monarch, and there is the gist of many a modern lamentation.

Fulmination, I feel, is a good deal less effective with young people than reasoned argument. It is my experience that the much-maligned youth of to-day *will* pay some attention to the views of a sympathetic adult who seeks to persuade them that not all conventions of sex behaviour are hypocritical and not all restraints puritanical.

In discussions on sex morality, as in any other matter, it is clear that a democracy must concede the right of any individual to try to persuade others to his viewpoint, whatever it may be. Normally, however, except where parents are instructing their own children, sex educationists do not speak purely as individuals. As officials of an organization, as employees of a local

authority, as voluntary workers in a club, they cannot completely divest themselves of their corporate status and speak purely as private people. Some compromise, therefore, is essential, for it is necessary to respect other people's convictions without surrendering one's own. That this *can* be done is well shown by the fact that in sex education to-day there collaborate in this country Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews and Agnostics. In a different society such compromise might not be so necessary—and might indeed scarcely be possible. But in drawing up plans for sex education in our particular society at this particular period of history it is, I feel, necessary to compromise on some points in order not to jeopardize the whole work.

Let us not delude ourselves, however, that even with the most reasoned arguments in the world all pre-marital sex relations would disappear. No amount of mere talk will of itself dam up the sexual urge of lusty youth. Far-reaching social changes are needed too, and among them is the removal of the all-too-many barriers to early marriage. Equally important is the need to give young people the feeling that they have some future and that there is something for which it is *worth while* to postpone their sexual satisfaction; that there is something that they can give to society, and which will give them an honoured place in it; some burning sense of purpose such as, in the years between the wars, inspired the young builders of the Soviet Union—or such as, in earlier days, inspired the first Christians. Such self-dedication would, I believe, be immensely more potent than any appeal to fear or threat of punishment.

One last word about my suggested definition of aims. I stated that sex behaviour should be according to a rationally determined code, but I do not, you will notice, prophesy what that code will be. This I point out, lest it be thought that the lack of specification is the result of oversight. Such is not the case.

It *would* be possible, I imagine, for us so to condition each new generation that it almost automatically thought and felt as *we* desired,

almost automatically fitted in with *our* code of behaviour. Experiment along these lines has achieved some considerable degree of success during the last twelve years in Nazi Germany. But, for me at any rate, no such reflex subservience to an authoritarian moral code is included in the aims of sex education. I am content to teach the facts as well as may be, to encourage an open and healthy attitude to sex, to insist on the need for determining conduct rationally—and to have faith that a generation so educated will be at least as capable of making correct moral judgments as I am.

Potential Dangers

When we leave the definition of aims and begin to draw up plans for action, there are, it seems to me, several dangers that must be avoided.

The first is that of Utopianism. There is a great temptation in sex education, as indeed in education generally, to draw up magnificent schemes that are totally irrelevant to the particular social setting within which they are to be put into practice. Let our plans, therefore, be impregnated through and through by an appreciation of what is possible and desirable here and now, not what might be in a brave new world.

The second danger is that of wasting energy on barren argument about whose job sex education is. For too long parents and teachers and medical practitioners have been, to use an Americanism, "passing the buck" to each other. Sterile disputation about the precise allocation of degrees of responsibility must give way to serious preparation for getting on with the job in hand and to close collaboration between all who have any part to play.

Another danger is that of over-emphasizing sex and isolating it from the rest of life. To this danger some of the early pioneers fell prey. The perhaps inevitable result of their determination to bring sex into its place in the educational picture was that they painted a canvas on which it loomed over-large. In their rightful insistence that children should not remain in black ignorance, they tended sometimes to overload

them with information beyond the bounds of their curiosity, intellectual ability or emotional understanding. This tendency we must avoid like the plague. Sex education, like health education and character training generally, should permeate the whole of life. The better it is, the less obvious it will be. It will just fit in naturally and inconspicuously into the ordinary life of home, school and community, and will be noticeable only to the degree to which it is imperfect.

But time is short, and I must proceed to more definite suggestions. If these suggestions seem very obvious, that will only be a very encouraging reflection of the recent rapid change of attitude in this matter. They would not have seemed obvious ten years ago.

Short-Term Plans

First I may mention the enlistment of general community support. Never, I think, has the mental atmosphere of the country been so favourable to sex education as now, and now is the time to crystallize support. Talks to public meetings, men's and women's guilds, educational and other discussion groups, and so on, should be arranged in each area. Radio talks, film shorts, posters, newspaper advertisements, etc., can be used to a similar end on a national scale. If this were done with energy and determination, I believe that all opposition to sex education, except that of the confirmed obscurantists, could be overcome within a very short period.

There is another immediate problem that needs mentioning. While we are perfecting our long-term plans and awaiting their fruition, our schools send out into the world each year vast numbers of children who have had no sort of reliable sex education. We cannot afford to be perfectionists and do nothing because we cannot do the best. It must be recognized that only a second-best result can be achieved in their case, but that is better than nothing. Indeed, it is astonishing how much *can* be done to re-orientate the attitudes of young people to sex by means of a few friendly talks. As a temporary measure, therefore, talks on sex should be arranged in youth clubs and the like and specially devised lessons given in the schools.

Long-Term Plans

I am sure, however, that you will agree that the sooner we get rid of this patchwork procedure, the better.

We must surely concentrate a good deal of attention on the education of the educators, so that a continuous scheme of sex education may be put into practice at the earliest possible moment. Long-term plans must include drastic alteration in school, university and training college curricula—but we cannot wait for that. Side by side with these changes must go the organization of immediate help to present parents, teachers, youth leaders, doctors, nurses and religious and social workers. What can be done to give such help?

Help for Parents

I would agree with Charles Dickens when he wrote: "We thought that, perhaps, it is right to begin with the obligations of home, sir; and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them," and shall therefore consider parents first.

It is reasonable to hope that children who have had their questions answered sensibly in the home; who have learned biology at school, including the biology of human reproduction; who have joined with other lasses and lads in mixed swimming and games and rambles and camps; who during courtship have had adequate preparation for marriage—that these parents of to-morrow will be able to play their part in the sex education of their own children. Such at least is the view of the thirteen-year-old London schoolgirl who wrote: "If the children know about it now, when they grow up and have children they will not be frightened to tell their children."

But that lies in the future. What of the parents of to-day? Rosy optimism is worse than useless, and it must be recognized that many present parents are too ignorant to explain the facts of sex to their children, too indolent to remedy their ignorance, and too tangled in their emotional attitudes to be able to do much were they very encyclopædias of sexual knowledge. But not *all*

present parents. Many are well informed, and many others anxious to inform themselves. Many have a thoroughly healthy attitude to sex and many others are eager to attain it. With such there are great possibilities.

Courses could be arranged for the parents of new entrants to the nursery or infant school, and perhaps again when their children pass on to the secondary stage. More systematic help and guidance could be given to expectant and nursing mothers at the clinics and welfare centres. The matter could be dealt with at village institutes, community centres, co-operative guilds and the like. Admittedly only a minority of parents would attend courses of this nature, but it is a valuable minority that should not be neglected.

Equipping the Teachers

So far as teachers are concerned, it is reasonable to expect a much more thorough preparation. Most of what is needed to provide the necessary background to sex education for the non-biologist student should indeed be part of the normal professional training course. All teachers need an understanding of the child's bodily, intellectual and emotional development, and this can only be based on a knowledge of fundamental physiological and psychological principles. It would also be very valuable for teachers to have an understanding of the sexual behaviour and problems characteristic of children of various ages, and to study in more detail those of the age-range which they are specially preparing to teach. Moreover, since sex education in the school will be effective in proportion as sex education in the home is not neglected, teachers need also to understand something of the problems of home life and infant training. All teachers should also be equipped with certain fundamental data which will enable them to answer adequately questions which happen to arise in their school lessons. This implies that all teachers in training—whether they are going to teach the functioning of living things or the structure of dead languages—should take a course in human and social biology.

Some training is needed also in the technique of sex education. The ways in which the various subjects of the school curriculum may be utilized as media of sex instruction, the value of various extra-curricular activities in the development of character, the effect of the general school routine and tone upon the fixing of sex habits and attitudes—all these should be studied.

If it be objected that there is no time to study all this, so much the worse for the miserably inadequate period of training which is still considered sufficient for most of our teachers. In our schools is built our future, and those who are its architects should no longer be satisfied with an apprenticeship of a duration which would not qualify them to mend a leaking lavatory.

Specialist teachers such as biologists naturally need fuller preparation along these lines, but at present they do not receive it. Biological courses in the universities are in the main of a formalized nature, appropriate only to the training of biological research workers—and the training colleges tend to repeat the same lectures at second hand. Alumni of these institutions are likely to be fairly familiar with the genetics of *Primula* and *Drosophila*, but to know little or nothing about that of *Homo sapiens*; to have more than a nodding acquaintance with the reproductive peculiarities of the obscurer myxomycetes and with the ecology of salt marshes, but to be almost completely ignorant of the sexual life of humans and of the functioning of their society.

We may hope that biology teachers of the future will have taken courses of nature study which have concentrated rather less upon the details of leaf venation and rather more upon such themes as reproduction, care of offspring, family life and social co-operation over a wide range of living organisms—not excluding humans. They may have included in their studies a consideration of the relationship (which is by no means one of identity) between sex and reproduction, of sex dimorphism, of sexual emotions, of courtship and of mating, of the origins of human society and its conventions of marriage and of the social control of sexual

expression. Their courses will have covered the workings of the endocrine glands and the influence of their secretions upon bodily and emotional development, and will have recognized the interdependence of physiological and psychological factors. Thus equipped with specialist knowledge, in addition to the general training which all teachers should receive, their special part in sex education will present them with few difficulties.

In the future we may have such teachers, but there are few to-day. In the meantime, then, what can be done? A great deal. Most present teachers of biology have the background which will enable them to pick up the necessary extra factual knowledge quite quickly, and many of them have the requisite personality. What is most needed in such cases is courses of instruction by specialists, dealing in part with those physiological and psychological aspects of sex which are not normally covered in university and training college syllabuses, and in part with the technique of sex instruction in the school.

The organization of such courses is recognized by progressive education authorities as being of prime importance, especially since the great majority of our teachers left college many years ago. It would obviously be desirable for certain members of school staffs to be released for a full term or year of concentrated study, but equally obviously this will for some time ahead be possible in very few cases. The next best alternative is the arrangement of vacation courses of perhaps a fortnight's duration, in which a good deal of ground could be covered. But even this will not be feasible for all teachers. Yet it must be very rarely that an authority would be unable to organize for its school staff, during the school term, a course of perhaps six or eight lectures on the materials and methods of sex education, and experience has shown that even in this limited time it is possible to do much good.

Youth Leaders and Welfare Workers

Now what of youth leaders? It is encouraging to note that the 1944 McMair Report comments that: "There are three

matters which are of great significance for young people—religion, politics and sex. They are certain to arise, sooner or later, in any discussions with boys and girls on social conditions or their own physical, mental or spiritual problems. Leaders must therefore be prepared to face them." When the county colleges envisaged in the new Education Act become a reality, they will presumably provide a useful channel for guidance in these matters, and plans should, I believe, be drawn up now for education in these colleges for family life, so that when the bus *does* come, albeit rather belatedly, we shall not miss it.

In the immediate future, we shall have to do the best we can under the present very difficult conditions of inadequately trained youth leaders, miserable club accommodation and so on. The difficulty is, moreover, accentuated by the fact that most of the club members will have received little or no sex education in earlier years. Apart, therefore, from definite lectures to the young people themselves, such as were suggested earlier, the main advance must, I think, be that of giving a general background of knowledge to youth leaders, which will help them to deal more effectively with the problems of behaviour which always arise in youth work and to give helpful personal guidance to their club members.

We must recognize, however, that young people spend only a few hours each week in their youth organization, and the major part of their waking time at work. Parallel with what is done in the club, therefore, it seems essential to tackle also the environment in factory, shop and office. The improvement of conditions of work, the proper organization of canteens and social and educational activities, the radical cleaning up of dirty urinals and closets which simply invite obscene epigraphy, the arrangement of discussions with the adult workers to enlist their co-operation in guiding their junior colleagues—all these are matters which may exert a powerful influence for good, and are matters within the province of the industrial welfare worker. The co-operation of these workers, and of shop stewards and trade

union officials, should therefore be enlisted in any balanced programme of sex education work.

Medical Practitioners

Now let us consider the medical profession. What part has it to play in sex education? The quite common opinion that doctors are peculiarly qualified to give sex instruction is, I suspect, a hangover of the feeling that sex is in some way pathological, and therefore to be handled only by medically qualified persons. It is also, in part, perhaps, a result of the historical fact that doctors played a pioneer part in sex education and have therefore been responsible for a good deal of the literature on the subject. But in general, just as teachers (even those with a good knowledge of human physiology and pathology) have not the necessary clinical experience to qualify them as doctors, so doctors (even those with a good knowledge of educational theory) have not the pedagogic experience to qualify them as educators. If, therefore, doctors are to play their full part in sex education, it is important that they should equip themselves with this experience.

Any other than elementary instruction on the venereal diseases is the doctor's province, as are other problems of sexual pathology, while a great deal of work in preparation for marriage, concerning the technique of intercourse, the practice of contraception and so on, is largely medical in nature. Medical practitioners also, particularly those specially concerned with the young child, should be able to give much helpful advice to parents.

But those medical practitioners who aspire to be sex educators will need to give careful study to the psychological aspects of sex as well as to its physiology; and they will need sociological insight too. Sex relations and marriage are not purely medical problems. Equally they are problems of politics and economics, of passion and of friendship, of intellectual companionship and mutual respect. Is it too much to hope that medical training might in the future pay more attention to these and other related matters? No doubt, as in the training of teachers, there is

the difficulty of already overcrowded syllabuses. But would not some little study along these lines be of more value to the general practitioner and his patients than a painfully acquired familiarity with the fine details of human anatomy? The answer would appear to be such an unqualified affirmative that it is to be hoped that medical practitioners will follow the example of the teachers who, up and down the country, are attending special courses to help to equip themselves to undertake sex education.

Other Health Workers

Other health workers, too, have a part to play. Particularly in rural areas, the district nurse and health visitors could do much to bring about a more enlightened attitude to sex among the parents with whom they come into contact. When a new baby is expected, they can suggest that the other children be told the truth about it; and when it has arrived they can give enlightened advice on such matters as toilet training and infantile masturbation. But to be really helpful to the mothers they meet, they will themselves in most cases need further preparation. Having already a good background knowledge, it should be fairly easy for them to extend their understanding. In the future this extra field should be part of their training; for the present special short courses should be arranged.

Personal Qualities in the Sex Educator

The question now arises: Suppose that all these different categories of people *do* attend special courses of instruction—will that guarantee their suitability to play a part in sex education? The answer, I suggest, is quite clearly “No.” He who would undertake sex education with success needs many qualities which may bear little or no relation to special training or academic attainment. The first essential is personal sex adjustment and an absence equally of any prudish disinclination to discuss sex and any prurient tendency to discuss it to excess. In all education the teacher needs a sympathetic understanding of the pupils, but this applies

with special force in sex education. Hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness are fatal. Honesty and tolerance are essential. Imagination is needed too—the ability to sympathize with the feelings of a child and to understand the perplexity of the adolescent, while yet retaining the mature judgment and emotional stability of the adult. One other quality I would add—that of a sense of humour. I know no solvent of strain more effective than laughter, and the person who cannot throw in a joke now and then has no place in sex education.

It would, I think, be difficult to improve on the words of Havelock Ellis, who once wrote that:

To fulfil his functions adequately, the master in the art of sexual hygiene must answer three requirements . . . he must have a sufficing knowledge of the facts of sexual psychology, sexual physiology and sexual pathology . . . he must have a wise and broad moral outlook, with a sane idealism which refrains from demanding impossibilities . . . finally, a genuine sympathy with the young, an insight into their sensitive shyness, a comprehension of their personal difficulties, and the skill to speak to them simply, frankly and humanely.

If, indeed, it is a question of choice between, on the one hand, an adult who is free from embarrassment, who understands children, is honest, sensitive, broadminded and tolerant, and yet has but the meagrest academic knowledge; and on the other hand an expert biologist, with a detailed knowledge of psychology, pathology and sociology, able to write theses on educational technique, and yet lacking in these warm human qualities, the former has the advantage every time. This is both a warning and an encouragement. It is a warning against judging people's suitability for sex education by their paper qualifications, and an encouragement to those thousands of good-hearted but modest folk in the street, who wish to help in sex education but have been doubtful of their ability to do so.

Co-operation and Research

The major part of this lecturing, prepara-

tion of literature, distribution of films and so on, must, it seems to me, be carried out by the Central Council for Health Education. Whether one likes it or not—and I know that there are some who do not like it—the various voluntary organizations in this field cannot hope to compete with a body having such considerable support, financial and otherwise, from central and local government bodies. But the word “compete” is perhaps a somewhat unsavoury one to use in this context, and I will not pursue the idea of competition. Co-operation, however, is another matter, and surely one of the most important jobs waiting to be done should be that of securing effective co-operation between all bodies in any way concerned with sex education. Apart from purely administrative considerations, there is an educational harvest to be reaped.

It is generally agreed, I hope, that sex education should no longer be considered as an isolated subject, and its integration with the rest of education, it seems to me, has two main aspects. One aspect is that of sex education as part of health education generally and, as I have already indicated, there is already a central body making great efforts along these lines. The other aspect is that of including sex education as part of a wider education for family life, and here, surely, is a worthwhile task in which many of the organizations I have referred to could play an important part.

What I should like to see in this country is a body carrying out work similar to that of the American Institute of Family Relations. Probably some sort of federal structure would be the most practicable in our case, for British voluntary organizations are extremely loth to commit suicide. But could not sex education grow into something much wider and richer if really close collaboration and co-ordination were achieved between all the bodies doing sex education work, the moral and social welfare organizations, those concerned with marriage guidance and family planning, organizations dealing with heredity, eugenics and population problems, those working in the field of maternal and child welfare, and so on? This is obviously a

matter requiring close and critical consideration by all the organizations concerned, but at any rate I commend the suggestion to their attention.

Among other matters which are simply crying out for attention is that of research. A very considerable volume of sex education work is being carried out—and, I venture to think, with some success. But we cannot close our eyes to the fact that it is all being done quite empirically. We have our ideas about the amount and degree of accuracy of the sex knowledge of the people we are trying to educate—but we have no exact knowledge. We have general impressions of what their attitudes to sex and sex behaviour are—but we have no exact knowledge. We make estimates of the relative efficacies of the various techniques of sex education—but again we have no exact knowledge. The securing of this exact knowledge should, I feel, be high up on our list of priorities. Just *how* it should be carried out I am not competent to say—that would need the combined intelligence of educationists, medical practitioners, psychologists, social workers, statisticians and experienced field research workers. But that the job must be done I am certain.

The Social Setting

I should like to go on to say something about the whole attitude of our society towards sex, about the shoddy back-street bookshop which flaunts sex and the public library which quite ignores it, about the influence of cinema and radio, and so on. But to do this would take me on to a whole programme of social reconstruction, and even if time allowed for this my knowledge would not. But I should like to close with the comment that people's attitudes to sex, like their attitudes to any other aspect of human life, do not crystallize in isolation, but are shaped and impregnated by the views of their fellow citizens and by the whole structure of the society in which they live. That is why some enthusiasts for sex education live in a fool's paradise. Imagining that it is possible in a few lectures to overcome the influence of years of living in a society with distorted

views of sex, they are due for disillusion. The best results will follow from sex education only when the whole of our society is remodelled and our children grow up from the earliest days surrounded by adults who feel that sex is an excellent and joyous thing in which man and woman join as equal

partners, sharing benefits and responsibilities alike. Meanwhile, our scheme of sex education must not be drawn up *in vacuo*, as if sex attitudes and sex behaviour were things fixed and immutable. If it is to be really potent, it must be sex education for our particular social setting.

GREGORY KING AND THE POPULATION OF ENGLAND AND WALES AT THE END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

By D. V. GLASS

GREGORY KING, that "curious computer," as Chalmers called him, affords one of the most intriguing puzzles in the history of British demography. He was described, on his monument in the Church of St. Benet, Paul's Wharf, London, as "a skilful herald, a good Accomptant, Surveyor, and Mathematician, A curious Penman, And well versed in Political Arithmetick. . . ."* In this last province, political arithmetic, he achieved marked contemporary recognition, being widely quoted by Davenant, who depended upon him for calculations in fields as diverse as population and coinage. Chalmers, who resuscitated his work and found both the manuscript of the *Natural and Politicall Observations* and Harley's comments upon it in the Harleian collection, referred to him in the most enthusiastic terms: "He who surpassed Petty, as a political calculator, must be allowed to have been a master of moral arithmetick."†

This high regard persists to-day. Yet King's only publication in the field of political arithmetic was a broadsheet summarizing the rates and duties payable under the Act of 6 and 7 William and Mary, c. 6 (levying duties on marriages, births, burials, bachelors and childless widowers).* The *Natural and Politicall Observations*, upon which King's position now largely rests, though forming the basis of much of Davenant's work—evidence that King was, as Chalmers says, "of a very communicative disposition"—remained in manuscript until first published by Chalmers in 1802 as an appendix to his own book, and the only modern reprint is that edited by Barnett.†

Moreover, the *Natural and Politicall Observations* themselves, bold and even startling as they are in their approach to the question of estimating the size and structure of the population of England and Wales—with which the present paper is concerned—raise more questions than they answer. In fact

* Dallaway, J. *Inquiries into the Origin and Progress of the Science of Heraldry in England*, Gloucester and London, 1793, Appendix II, p. xlviii.

† Chalmers, G. *An Estimate of the Comparative Strength of Great Britain*, London, 1804, Appendix, p. 27. The 1804 edition is referred to throughout this paper.

* B.M., 816.m. 6/80.

† Barnett, G. E. *Two Tracts by Gregory King*. Baltimore, 1936, which also contains a facsimile of the title page of the *Observations*, and a valuable introduction, to which I am greatly indebted for source references.